

Interview H0205: with Sambo, Tenzin Thondrub [tib. bsam pho, bstan 'dzin don grub, (India, 1981) : Part No. 5 of 25

Sambo was an important aristocratic official in the Tibetan government. He discusses the loss of large amounts of gold and silver during Reting's Regency as well as Reting's personal life, including his sexual relations with boys and women. He also describes how anonymous posters criticizing Reting were put up throughout Lhasa.

Q

What about the Nepalese?

A

There were many Nepalese in Lhasa. All of the gold and silver could only be taken as a loan by the Tibetans. The Tibetans took this gold and silver as a loan and then lent it to the Nepalese. When they wanted the gold and silver loans back, there were problems since some of the Nepalese traders did not have the cash in hand to return in immediately and it continued to go on like that. I don't know exactly what happened, but it got delayed. Later, the gold and silver were not there.

Q

If the gold and silver were not there, wouldn't there be a lot of talk? Did the government not make inquiries? Didn't they look into the matter?

A

The government did not make any inquiries because on the paper everything was there. On paper, the gold and silver was given out on loans and all the records were there, like to whom at what amount were they given as loans. But in reality, the gold and silver were not in the treasury. In 1950, [Sawang](#) Surkhang was the overall person in charge of economic

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affairs. Surkhang did look into the matter and made an attempt to recover the money. Although, he didn't get all the silver that was written in the loan contracts, he was able to recover about half of the amount. There was no chance of recovering the full amount of the principal, let alone getting the interest on the loans. Finally, half the amount of principal was forgiven and half the amount was recovered from the people who had taken the loans. Those who had borrowed the money were only able to give half the amount and the government could only collect half the amount. To recover the full amount with the interest was impossible, because by this time the price of the silver had gone up and the interest had been accumulating. There was no way that these people could return the full amount. [Panda](#) and [Sandu](#) being traders were able to return the full amount along with the interest and on top of that they were able to make some profit for themselves. However, the aristocrats could not make use of the capital and were not able to make any profit. The government suffered a heavy loss.

Q

Why is it that all this money disappeared during Reting's Regency? Why not during Taktra's period?

A

During Taktra's reign there was no silver left.

Q

Wasn't there any investigation or weren't there instances where people were saying that a lot of the silver was missing? That the gold and silver were not in the treasury?

A

There were no instances like that. The silver had been given out as loans and it was all recorded and there were receipts from the people to whom the loans had been given out. If anyone checked and asked, "Where is the gold?" They would show the records. On paper, everything was still intact and nothing was missing. All of the records were there mentioning that such and such an amount was given to so and so. But when you actually checked in the treasury there was no gold or silver left. Much later the sweepers kept their blankets inside these boxes and slept in them.

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Q

Since the Government gave this gold and silver out as loans wasn't it the government's duty to recover and collect this money? Why was all the blame given to Reting?

A

Reting Labrang [itself] took a lot of the loans. They were probably the first to start taking these loans; they were like the horse running in front. Likewise [Langdün](#) [the Prime Minister] also took a loan. Starting right from the top, everyone started taking loans.

Q

Did every kalön take loans?

A

Not everyone. There was [Bönshö](#), Trenthong, Surkhang, Yuthok, Gyentsen Yönten and a few more. Based on this silver, they printed a lot of new coins, like the three [sang](#) coin (tib. sangsum gormo [srang gsum sgor mo]) and the ten [sang](#) coin (tib. jugor [bcu sgor]).

Q

Were these coins printed on the basis of the silver they had?

A

The government had to print new currency based on the silver bricks they had. Besides these bricks of silver, the government did not have any silver. The quality of silver was much purer in the case of the Jugor.

Q

Was it?

A

The amount of silver in the case of the [trangga](#) garpo coin wasn't as much, whereas for the Jugor and Sangsum Gormo it was almost 90% pure silver. There probably was a small mixture of some other alloys.

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Q

Can you tell us about some other incidents during Reting's period?

A

Let's take the case of the [Laja](#) office.

Q

Didn't the [Laja](#) Office catch on fire during the Reting's regency? Who were the heads of the [Laja](#)?

A

Yes. The [Laja](#) [heads] were [two tsidrung] Thupten Dawa [tib. thub bstan zla ba] and Ngawang Söpa [tib. ngag dbang bzod pa] together with the lay official Sechung [tib. gsar byung].

Q

Who else?

A

Besides them there was no one else.

Q

Weren't there more than three people?

A

There was one more, but it was a position of an additional head (tib. lembar [las 'phar]).

Q

Who was the lembar?

A

There was no lembar.

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Q

Normally there are three [Laja](#) and one lembar, weren't there?

A

Yes, that was true. Normally there were only three [Laja](#), but during Reting's regency he appointed more lembar. Actually, the lembars didn't have any additional work. It was just an additional person. For example the shape and Tsipön rank also had lembar.

Q

Can you tell us how their office caught fire?

A

For example the [Trunyichemmo](#) also had a lembar.

Q

Talama was the lembar, right?

A

Yes.

Q

Can you please tell us how the [Laja](#) caught fire?

A

We were very small children and we were told that the [Laja](#) had caught fire. We could see heavy smoke rising up in the sky.

Q

Leaving the [Jokhang](#) seriously damaged?

A

No, it wasn't seriously damaged. The damage wasn't so heavy that they couldn't repair it later on.

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Q

They said that they were heating butter to be used to make tea and that was the main reason why the [Laja](#) caught fire.

A

Did they? I just heard that something happened in the kitchen which caused the fire.

Q

Yes, they said they were heating butter that was going to be used in the tea and while heating the butter the office caught fire.

A

I don't know exactly how the fire started, but I feel it was just an accident. There was nothing pre-planned and there was no conspiracy involved. I heard that the three [Laja](#) were relieved of duty and new ones were appointed.

Q

Was Taring [tib. phreng ring] one of the new [Laja](#)?

A

Taring was one. Then there was the late Kusangtse who was my maternal uncle with the pockmarks, Tarkhang Chöndze [tib. tar khang chos mdzad] and Liushar [tib. sne'u shar]. They were the four new [Laja](#). Taring was the lembar. When you say [Laja](#) Taring, he was the additional [Laja](#).

Q

So he didn't become a real [Laja](#), right?

A

Yes. However, although he was known as a lembar, he was the same as a real [Laja](#). The problem was that when he applied for the post of [Laja](#), the position was already filled and there were no more seats. So they named him an additional [Laja](#), but in reality he enjoyed the power and position of a real [Laja](#). [laughter]

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Q

Maybe Taring had asked for the post much earlier. When he later came to claim the post they might have had problems because the post was already taken, was it like that?

A

Most probably it must have been something like that. Actually, they did not follow the rules and regulations very systematically. For example, when they asked for the positions, it was more like the [Barkor](#) [tib. bar skor] marketplace where people bargained by using their fingers to indicate the price in their sleeves. They were doing all sort of things. I feel bad telling you all these bad things, but when we talk about history, I have to say these things.

Q

Did Taring give any bribes?

A

Taring used to take photographs and things like that. Maybe because of that he had to pay less than the others.

Q

No, he said he didn't have to pay a single penny.

A

Maybe it was like that.

Q

When did the [Laja](#) Office catch on fire?

A

It must have been around the Fire-Ox year. I am not sure. Probably, the new [Laja](#) were appointed in the Fire-Mouse Year.

Q

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It must be around 1950s. We should ask Mr. Taring. He can tell us the right time, right?

A

Yes, I think he might have a more definite idea about the time.

Q

We should leave this for now.

A

Although the [Laja](#) were relieved from their duties and responsibilities, they still remained with the rank of Khenjung.

Q

They said they were heating butter or something like that.

A

Yes, it must have been something like that.

Q

There were some problems concerning the [Laja](#) office, right?

A

Yes, there were. It was said that the [Laja](#) Office also had some gold. Again Reting Labrang asked for this gold to be given as a loan. When they asked for a loan it was quite probable that the [Laja](#) had quite a large amount of gold. Otherwise, the Reting Labrang would not ask for two or three tola as a loan. When the Reting Labrang asked for the loan from the [Laja](#), my late uncle was supposed to have showed some negative attitude [tib. rnam 'gyur] and said something. I don't remember clearly. Anyway, they did not give them a loan. Much later, when my late uncle asked for two weeks leave so that he could visit a hot springs, he got permission to leave and he also submitted the report for leaving. However, when he left for the hot springs, they said he had not gotten permission and had just left by himself, and that it was a serious matter. On that basis they relieved him of his duty. [laughter]

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Q

Are you sure that he had taken permission to go on leave?

A

He had taken leave and he possessed the letter granting permission. They had granted him two weeks leave. However, when they said that he had not taken permission, there was no way for him to say that he had gotten permission. He wasn't given a chance to say anything. When Reting accused him straightforwardly, he could not refuse the charges. He was summoned to the Shö ga and they said that he had gone to the hot spring without taking leave and that was very bad. Then he was relieved of his duty. That was done by the Regent.

Besides that incident, there was the case of [Khyungram](#) [tib. khyung ram] which was ridiculous. Reting didn't like [Khyungram](#) and they also acted like they were in a movie. It was really like acting in a movie when somebody reported something and then somebody did something. Some abbots suggested that Reting should be offered an estate for his accomplishments. This was a part of the movie. Then [Khyungram](#) spoke against it.

Q

What was all this talk about Reting Labrang needing so much money? I heard that his Labrang was one of the richest in the entire country. If you would say that [Taktra](#) Labrang needed money, I could understand it, it would make sense because [Taktra](#) Labrang was nothing before he became the Regent. It was one of the smaller Labrang. But Reting Labrang was one of the richest in the country, so what was this talk about him needing so much money, or was it that he didn't have any money?

A

It was true that Reting was a very rich Labrang. It was not true that they didn't have any money. They had in fact a lot of money. There must be a limit to a person's desire and one has to have contentment. The people who preach religion say that you must practice religion, it is very good, you must have contentment. But in reality those who preach it don't practice it. The same applies to tolerance. When they preach, they say you must have tolerance, you must tolerate others, even if they do wrong, you must tolerate them

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and show them tolerance. In reality, it was different. If someone spoke against him, he was out to get him. This was his tolerance. [laughter]

I really have to speak like this against him, as a Lama and as a leader. I don't know what type of person he was. Actually, I am a person who doesn't have any capability, but when I have to talk, I have to say something to all high ranking people. Take me for example, right now I can speak a lot of things about other people. I can say they should have done like this, they should have done like that. But if I would have been in their place, I would have done the same and followed them and I would not have been able to do anything better. I think this is quite natural. [laughter] [Khyungram](#) and Kusangtse were treated like that. There were also fair and unfair things about the appointment to positions and people rushed for the positions by means of bribes. This was also shameful. Let alone a lama, even if we would have been in his position, I swear by the statue of the [Jokhang](#) Buddha [tib. jo [bo](#) rin po] that we would not have done like that. Many [miser](#) were destroyed/ scattered [tib. 'thor]. Reting Labrang did a lot of wool trade and they gave out tea bricks and cloth and in return they collected 2-3-4-5 loads of wool. When they sent the wool, they would request the households who had the pack animals and they couldn't refuse them. They would say, "If this is for the [labrang](#), of course we will serve you and you don't need to pay the [transport] fee." Like this, they outrageously collected all the essential things from the 13 provinces of Tibet. As far as his misconduct was concerned, he [Reting] also kept Phünkhang Jedrung [tib. phun khang rje drung] like his wife. I swear by the three jewels that it was so lawless, like implying as if he was going to marry him.

Q

I don't think that was true.

A

Similarly the son of [unclear] Lhase Kushab [tib. lha sras sku zhabs] and the son of Shasur [tib. bshad zur] were also ones like that.

Q

Was that Gedarla [tib. dge dar lags]

A

No. He was the late Shasur's son and there was a daughter also.

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Q

Wasn't there trouble about Jogtre's [tib. lcog bkras] wife? This probably was true.

A

Yes. Anyway, he [Reting] didn't maintain his celibacy, but outwardly he implied that he had boyfriends and he had relations with boys.

Q

I saw in Richardson's book that during that time a poster was put up. In it was mentioned, "Reting had done a lot of trading. We doubt whether his vows as a monk were pure or not. If his vows were not pure, probably he could not ordain the young Dalai Lama as a monk." This could have been when Reting was the Regent or later. Can you tell us anything about this?

A

It was not during the Reting war. It was while Reting was the Regent.

Q

Was it?

A

Yes.

Q

How was it done?

A

It was in a poster put on the wall. It was while Reting was the Regent.

Q

Are you definitive that the poster was stuck up on the wall? Where was it put up?

A

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I don't know exactly where they put up the poster.

Q

What was the content of the poster?

A

It said that Reting was not a pure monk. I don't recollect the content of the poster very clearly, but the general idea was that Reting had not kept his vows as a monk and probably it was written that he cannot ordain the Dalai Lama.

Q

Anyway, there was a poster that stated that Reting had not kept his monks vows, right?

A

Yes, the poster said that he was not a monk.

Q

The poster said that he was not a monk. What had it demanded that Reting should do?

A

In the poster it was written that Reting had relations with a woman.

Q

Are you definite that the poster was stuck up?

A

Yes, I am definite about this.

Q

When was the poster put up?

A

Most probably it was in the Earth-Tiger Year. That would have been around 1938 or 1939.

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Q

Was there only one poster, or were there many posters? Do you remember people putting up a poster?

A

We heard that someone had thrown a poster. Later I found out that the person who had thrown the poster was one of our servants. He told me about this.

Q

How was it done and where did he throw it? Did he paste the poster on the wall or did he throw it?

A

It was pasted onto the wall. He was my late brother's servant. My brother (late) was a monk official. He was called Dingkar [tib. lding mkhar]. The Tsipön with the pockmarks, Kusangtse, was my maternal uncle. My late brother and the Tsipön were very closely related. They had the same father, but a different mother. The servant was serving my late brother at Dingkar. One night, both of them were staying alone.

Q

You mean at Dingkar?

A

No, at that time, my brother was not called Tsögo [tib. mtsho sgo]. He was called Dingkar.

Q

You mean Dingkar and Kusangtse were alone?

A

Dingkar, who was later known as Tsögo, and Kusangtse sent their servants to put up the poster.

Q

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Was the letter written in cursive or in the printed script (tib. ujen [dbu can])?

A

Most probably it was ujen. Normally, when people write posters they would write it in ujen so that people won't recognize their handwriting.

[Note by Shelling: I heard from my late older brother Sonam Tobgye [tib. bsod nams stobs rgyas] that our father Chime Dorje [tib. 'chi med rdo rje] (Shelling) told him that he saw the poster which was thrown on some of the paths going to the offices and that it was written in very good cursive handwriting and the writing style was also very good. It seems it was written by a learned [kudrak](#).]

Q

That is true. When you write something against the king then there is bound to be a lot of trouble, unless you are careful.

A

They wrote in the poster that the Regent had a woman.

Q

Did they mention the name of the woman?

A

No. It was not mentioned. The servant told me only much, much later, when Reting had already resigned from the Regency. Otherwise, he won't have told me.

Q

Then the Reting problem started?

A

Yes. After Reting resigned, then his trouble started and then when everything was over, only then he told me about it.

Q

What was the reason that these two officials sent their servants to stick up the poster?

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A

There was no specific reason. The only thing was because the Regent did not function well.

Q

You mean they just wanted to provoke or create a problem [tib. brnyas brko] for the Regent?

A

Yes. Yes, they wanted to create some trouble for the Regent. Actually they didn't have any special reasons.

Q

Was it in the Tiger Year?

A

Most probably it was in the year of the Earth-Tiger. I remember one verse written in the poster, it said, "If we can steal, then we will steal the Buddha Statue in the [Jokhang](#) of Lhasa; if we can kill, then we will kill the Regent." [tib. rku thub na lha sa'i jo [bo](#) yang rku gi yin/ gsod thub na rgyal tshab rin po che yang gsod kyi yin]

Q

They were referring to Reting who was the Regent then?

A

Yes. Such a thing happened during Reting's Regency.

Q

It was not the same poster you are talking about? You are talking about some other posters?

A

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It was a different poster. It was in the Earth-Tiger or Earth-Hare year. It was the year when there was a shortage of rain in Lhasa. There were many people who spoke against the Regent.

Q

You mean because of shortage of rain?

A

Yes.

Q

In the year when there was a shortage of rain, they [government] sold grain at a very cheap price to the poor people.

A

Yes, they sold it very cheap. Each person could only buy ten [dre](#).

Q

So for each person the government sold ten [dre](#) each.

A

Yes. [unclear because of many people talking and making noise] People were talking against the government. .. So the dislike towards the government subsided. There were posters pasted on the walls.

Q

Do you mean before that?

A

Yes.

Q

Were there several other posters?

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A

Yes.

Q

What were the contents of these posters?

A

It was natural that these pamphlets would contain only bad things against the people concerned. If it was something that could be said in front of the person, there was no need to put up a poster.

Q

That is true. But what was written in these posters?

A

There was something written about Phünkhang.

Q

You mean Keyangla [tib. skal g.yang lags]?

A

Yes.

Q

So they mentioned something about Keyangla?

A

Yes. She was called Phünkhang Ani. They specifically mentioned something about her. There was also mention of Joktre's wife.

Q

All these things were mentioned in the posters?

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A

Yes. It was said that the content of such posters was not reliable, but sometimes you just wondered how they got that information.

Q

Now to put up these posters normally you don't need any evidence or basis. Anyone can put up these posters. I suppose they must have stuck these posters at the long prayer pole Shar Kyaring [tib. shar skya ring] and at Ganden Thangnyöl [tib. dga' ldan thang snyol] and other similar places where it could be easily seen by a large number of people.

A

Yes. They also stuck these posters in front of our house where there was a long prayer pole called Kelsang Darchen [tib. skal bzang dar chen]. They stuck these posters anywhere where they were easily seen by everyone.

Q

When these posters were put up on the wall, what did the government do? Did they just leave them there or did they collect them or tear them down?

A

When such posters were seen, one had to report it to the on-duty low level workers who patrol and deliver messages (tib. Sabre Korchak [sa res skor 'chag]) and he in turn gave it to the Nangtseshar Office.

Q

I see. So whoever saw these posters had to report it to the Sabre Korchak and they would hand it over to the office.

A

Yes, one had to inform the Sabre Korchak that such posters were put up in front of my house. Then he would report to the Nangtseshar Mayor (tib. [mipön](#) [mi dpon]). Then the mayor in turn reported it to the Kashag and the Kashag reported it or presented the posters to the Regent. That was the custom.

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Q

Did the Kashag have to report or present the poster to the Regent right away?

A

Yes, most probably they reported it to the Regent. They would send it among the many letters that had to be presented to the Regent for his consideration and approval.

Q

When such a poster appeared, in the evening did all the people talk about it? Did everyone come to know about it?

A

They would talk from the morning itself. Everyone would have heard, read or seen it. They would talk among themselves and it became public knowledge.

Q

Would the talk spread throughout the city?

A

Yes. People would talk among themselves and it slowly spread and everyone would come to know about it. There was no need to make big publicity. In a short period, everyone came to know about it.

Q

Would these posters come in the form of very beautifully written songs or verses?

A

I doubt it. Normally they try to write the matter as briefly as possible so that people could read it easily. If they had to write it in the form of songs or verses, maybe they had to write quite a long letter and the poster would become big so when they went at night to put up the posters, it would take more time since the poster was big. This increased the chance of being detected since it was more conspicuous. If the poster was very big, then they had to put a lot of glue on it and while putting the glue, the chance of being detected increased.

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So, I think normally the posters were small and the contents were as brief as possible. These posters were put up in the middle of night.

Q

I heard they would stick up the posters at night?

A

Yes, but if other people saw it and asked what are doing, what should they say? What if they seized you from the back side of your neck and took you away? Therefore, they stuck up the posters at night.

Q

So in the morning everyone could read it, right?

A

Yes, they would stick them at midnight or around dawn. These posters were put up wherever it offered a good opportunity to draw crowds, like on the huge stone pillars at the front of Potala (the Doring Chima [tib. rdo ring phyi ma]) and also on the stone pillar at the front of [Jokhang](#), and so on.

Q

Where else did they put the posters?

A

They would also stick them in Ramoche area. Usually, if people would stick the posters near their residence, it would be dangerous. So the people who put up the poster would make sure that he put the poster quite a distance away from his place because otherwise the chances of being suspected and imprisoned increased. In 1958-59, people asked me to write posters for them so I would write these posters in ujen. I didn't dare to write it in my hand writing script. I wrote them once or twice like this. Those posters were most probably put up near the long prayer pole called Jüyag Darchen [tib. jus yag dar chen].

Q

What were these posters about?

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A

It was about the problems they had during the [Chushigandru](#) period. It was about the [Chushigandru](#).

Q

Was it in praise of [Chushigandru](#) or denouncing it?

A

It was against the Chinese.

Q

Later, didn't the Chinese come to know that you had written these posters?

A

No, they didn't know about it.

Q

Didn't you admit it and inform them that you had written that?

A

When they didn't know about my involvement in writing these posters, why should I admit it? That would be stupid. [laughter] Then there was this person Phünkhang [Sawangchemmo](#). He was again someone who was completely useless. He was not a person I admired. He was just a useless fellow. He had this crazed desire to ape the Chinese. In his house he would copy all the Chinese tables and decorations and so on. Even now they are still there.

Q

At that time, how old was Phünkhang?

A

Most probably he was in his 50's.

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Q

[unclear] Some people say that [Khyungram](#) had hoped to get that position, right?

A

Khyungram was a proud person and he was quite old, like 57-58 years old. So he would just treat us like kids and tell us, "You child, sit down."

Q

Some people say that when Reting was first appointed as the Regent, they had to roll the [senriy](#) lottery and there were two other candidates such as Phurbujog [tib. phur bu lcok] and [Ganden Tripa](#) [tib. dga ldan khri pa]. Actually it was just a fraud. They had already decided Reting to be the Regent. Is this possible?

A

Wouldn't that be quite difficult to do that since they had to roll the [senriy](#) lottery to choose?

Q

If they really wanted to lie then I think they could just put Reting's name in all the three [tsamba](#) balls [used in the lottery]. When they wrote down the names, were there any other persons who witnessed it?

A

When they rolled the [senriy](#) lottery, it was not done like that. The four [Trunyichemmo](#) presided over the whole proceedings. They would ask, "Okay, now who are the candidates?" So they would give the names and the names were written down on paper by one of the [Trunyichemmo](#), rolled up and put inside the round ball of [tsamba](#) dough. Then the dough balls were rolled around and around [in a bowl] and whichever comes out [from the bowl], they took it to the place where the meeting was being held. Then in front of everyone the ball was opened and the name was read out. So in such cases, it all depended on the individual's luck. This was the real [senriy](#) lottery. But when it was said that the [senriy](#) approved it, there was nobody going to ask about the divination. It was what he himself said.

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Q

There was also the saying, "The butcher who killed the lama and the murderer who killed the male goat [Reting]." [tib. bla ma bsad pa'i bshan pa/ ra pho bsad pa'i [lag](#) dmar], right? Can you tell us something more about Reting Rinpoche's accomplishments and his failings? Can you tell us these things in detail?

A

If I would tell you in detail, it would be endless. I will tell you the major ones.

Q

Please tell us in detail.

A

One of the good deeds done by Reting was that where there was a famine he distributed or rather made the government sell grain at a very low price to the people. Each person was permitted to buy 10 [dre](#) of grain.

Q

Were these grain sold to everybody regardless of whether they were monks and laymen and wherever they lived?

A

Well, it was sold in Lhasa and Shö and probably in the dzongs and estates regardless of whether a person was a monk or layman. The better-off people didn't go to buy it and the poor or humble people took sacks and went to buy the grain. But I don't remember very clearly the names and the exact places where the grain was sold - and about his misdeeds and failings, I have already told you before.

Q

During Reting's time were there any purchases of arms and ammunition or improvements in the military?

A

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Probably not. During Reting's Regency no guns were bought. No new guns were bought.

Q

Was there any during [Taktra](#)?

A

Yes. He [Reting] obtained a permit to purchase a certain number of guns from the British.

Q

Didn't he buy those guns?

A

Here again, most of the permits and allotments were taken up by Reting Labrang.

Q

So it means during Reting's time they brought guns but the major share of permits went to Reting Labrang. But still he [Reting] managed to bring guns?

A

Yes, he managed to bring the gun known as Mauser. It was German made.

Q

Yes, anyway he brought some guns?

A

Yes, and they were mostly taken out by Reting Labrang. A few permits were distributed among the [kudrak](#) and the big traders like [Panda](#) and [Sandu](#). This was not for the government. It was for the private sector.

Q

It doesn't make any difference. It would not need to be for the government. So he brought out weapons, right?

A

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This was done as business for getting private profit.

Q

There is no fault in doing that. [laughter]

Q

Didn't the [Sambo](#) family get any guns?

A

No, we didn't get any. At that time, the British offered the guns as a gift. There was a joke going around saying, "You just leave some rotten eggs there. Do you want a pistol?" [tib. sgo nga rul pa bzhag/ pisi tob dgos kyi 'dug gas]

Q

What does it mean?

A

It is like this. When you go to approach the British, it is our custom to offer some eggs, meat, butter and so on. Furthermore, they would take some vegetables along. With this they would go to the British who were staying at [Dekyilingka](#) and say that they are very pleased to have the British in Lhasa and they have brought few presents. When the British used the eggs and the meat, some of the eggs might have been rotten. Now among the British mission there were a few staff members like Rai Bahadur and then some Sikkimese clerks like Rimshi Sonam Tomden [tib. rim bzhi bsod nams stobs ldan] and there was another person known as Lobsang [tib. blo bzang] Babu. So when the Tibetans went along to see the British with these offerings, these clerks would ask them where are you going, and why you are going and so on. So, the Tibetans would reply that they have come to see the British officers and they have brought some gifts for them. These clerks would say, "Alright leave the rotten eggs. Do you want pistols?" Actually it was just meant as a joke, because it sometimes happened that among the eggs, there were a few rotten eggs also.

Q

I think the British only gave the gun permits to the shape.

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A

Yes, the shape and the [Trunyichemmo](#) were given permits for pistols.

Q

Did the British offer any guns to the Tshipön?

A

The Tshipön didn't get any pistols.

Q

You mean the [Trunyichemmo](#) had better guns?

A

The [Trunyichemmo](#) and the [Shape](#) got better guns. Although the [Trunyichemmo](#) and the Tshipön were supposed to be equal in rank, in reality the Tshipön were under the Kashag and they were not the over-all chiefs whereas the [Trunyichemmo](#) who were the over-all chiefs of the monks. So, they were more powerful.

Q

I think the British offered a lot of gifts to the big Lamas and their [labrang](#)?

A

Yes, to them also. I think the British gave or distributed gifts to the abbots also.

Q

No, no I mean the big reincarnated Lamas whose names were very famous?

A

Yes, they must have offered them some gifts too. During Reting's reign, lots of gifts were being accepted. Even for the appointment of low posts like the shengo and [geyog](#) which needed to be approved by the government along with the Regent's seal. So in these cases they had to offer gifts and so on.

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Q

No, I don't agree with that. Only the shengo's appointment needs to be approved and sanctioned by the Kashag and the Regent. His subordinates like the [geyog](#) did not need to be approved by the government.

A

While we were in prison, a lot of people told me that even the shengo's subordinates' names had to be approved and sealed by the Kashag and Regent.

Q

The Regent only appointed the shengo. His subordinates were appointed by the shengo himself and the Regent did not interfere in that matter. Officially the Regent did not appoint the shengo's appointments. But the Regent might hint that such and such a person should be appointed as his subordinate.

A

Yes, it could have been something like that. Anyway, the whole system worked like that, except for the low, very low ranks like the sweepers and the people who measured the grain in Bo units (tib. bokhawa ['bo kha ba]), all other government officials had to pay their way through by bribing. Starting right from lay officials upwards, they had to pay their way through bribes and the [tsidrung](#) were also the same. Likewise, in the military also, the [rupön](#) and the [gyagpön](#) upward they had to pay their way. Only the [jugpön](#) [squad leader of 10] was appointed in the regiment. So in these appointments, there were no instances in which you could say that appointments were genuinely based on their abilities and capabilities. Everyone had to buy one's way in. So that's how things were being done at the time of Reting's regency. Now we come to [Taktra](#).

Q

Now we have not forgotten to discuss any of Reting's accomplishments or good deeds?

A

Do you think that there are any real accomplishments achieved by Reting?

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Q

Then what are his bad deeds or his failings?

A

Maybe you could mention among his achievements that he had sired a child such as Tseyang's son who was known as Bu Penam [tib. bu pad rnam] because Tibet had a large area and small population. [laughter] When you see this Bu Penam, you will just laugh and wonder how anyone could doubt or question who his father was [he looked like Reting].

Q

Can you swear on this by the Three Jewels?

A

Yes, I can.

Q

Is it really true?

A

Yes, it is. His son is still living and when you see him, you just cannot deny that he was sired by anyone other than by Reting.

Q

The child could look like Reting because his father was related to the Regent, no?

A

Tseyang was Thupten Gyentsen's [tib. thub bstan rgyal mtshan] wife and Thupten Gyentsen is related to Reting. But the child looks more like the Regent than his father. If the similarity were not so much then the people would say that it was natural because his father was related to the Regent. So there was bound to be some similarity between them. However, the child looks much more like Reting than his father. So, when anyone saw him, he automatically felt that the child was fathered by Reting.

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Q

So today we shall leave the topic of Reting and go to some other topics. Let's talk about [Künphel](#). The Government issued a verdict summoning [Künphel](#) to appear before the Tsondu. Can you tell us how many days he was summoned to appear before the Tsondu? What happened on the first day, what happened on the second day, and so on? Can you tell us everything in detail?